



# News Release

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## **CALIFORNIA'S TEEN BIRTH RATE DROPS TO RECORD LOW**

SACRAMENTO – California's teen birth rate dropped to a record low in 2004, the California Department of Health Services (CDHS) announced today. The rate declined to 38.1 births for every 1,000 females ages 15-19, a decrease of 2 percent from the rate of 38.9 in 2003. The state's teen birth rate fell for the 13th consecutive year, representing a 46.3 percent reduction from its peak in 1991.

"We must continue to address teen births in California," said Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. "It is proven that a lower teen birth rate means fewer children in foster care, improved high school graduation rates and reduced taxpayer costs for public assistance programs."

Teen birth rates dropped in 33 of 58 California counties in 2004, including eight of the 10 counties with the largest number of births to teens. Sacramento dropped by 5.2 percent; Orange, 2.6 percent; Riverside, 2.2 percent; San Joaquin, 1.9 percent; San Diego, 1.8 percent; Los Angeles, 1.4 percent; San Bernardino, 0.7 percent; and Fresno, 0.2 percent.

"The continuing decline in California's teen birth rates points to the importance of the state's successful teen pregnancy prevention programs," said CDHS Director Sandra Shewry.

Teen birth rates also declined in all major racial/ethnic groups. American Indian/Aleut/Eskimo teens had the largest decline of 10.7 percent, followed by Asian/Pacific Islander, 9.6 percent; White/Other, 6.7 percent; African-American, 4.8 percent; Multiracial, 1.7 percent; and Hispanic, 1.4 percent. Asian/Pacific Islander teens continued to have the lowest teen birth rate, 12.2 births per thousand females ages 15-19. Hispanics had the highest teen birth rate, 64.3, almost four times that of White/Other, 16.7, and more than five times that of Asian/Pacific Islander teens.

California's teen birth rate has been lower than the national rate for the last six years. In 2004, California's rate was 38.1 births per 1,000 females ages 15-19, compared with the national rate of 41.2 per 1,000, based upon the National Center for Health Statistics' "Preliminary Births for 2004" published earlier this year. Even so, California's teen birth

rate is more than six times the rate of Japan or the Netherlands and more than twice the rate of New Hampshire, which had the lowest rate in the United States in 2003.

Teen births cost California taxpayers \$1.4 billion annually. This figure includes tax revenue costs on parents' income and consumption, public assistance, direct and administrative costs, such as welfare and medical assistance, costs for increased foster care placement, incarceration of children and children's increased likelihood to become teen parents themselves, with lower educational and career achievements.

There were 1,033 fewer teen births in 2004 than if the 2003 teen birth rate continued, saving California taxpayers more than \$30 million.

Since taking office, Governor Schwarzenegger has committed himself to reducing teen births in California and has been a forceful advocate in supporting the following statewide programs aimed at preventing teen pregnancy:

- Community Challenge Grant: Funds communities to implement locally developed multidimensional prevention strategies to reduce teen and unintended pregnancies and to promote responsible parenting.
- Family PACT (Planning, Access, Care and Treatment): Provides family planning services for low-income women and men to reduce the rate of unintended pregnancies and improve reproductive health.
- Information and Education: This program's goals include decreasing teen and unintended pregnancy through proactive prevention education that helps young men and women of childbearing age to make responsible decisions relevant to sexual and reproductive behavior.
- TeenSmart Outreach: Targets teens at high risk for pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections and includes teens who are parents, homeless, victims of abuse and/or school dropouts.
- Male Involvement Program: Targets males ages 12-24 to reduce teen and unintended pregnancies by promoting responsible parenting and the roles of males in the prevention of teen and unintended pregnancies.
- Adolescent Family Life Program: Provides case management services to male and female teens and their children.
- Cal-Learn Program: This program within the California Department of Social Services is designed to reduce teen pregnancy rates and help pregnant and parenting teenagers on welfare to graduate from high school to improve their chances of escaping poverty.
- California School Age Families Education (Cal-SAFE): This school-based program serves expectant and parenting students and their children with a goal of clients not having subsequent children before graduation.

"Effective prevention programs and public health messages about the consequences of teen pregnancy must continue if we are to reduce the state's teen birth rate even further," said Shewry.

For more teen birth data, please see charts on the teen birth news release posted on CDHS' Web site at <http://www.applications.dhs.ca.gov/pressreleases/>